

(Washington, D.C.) - On Friday, Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) challenged the Texas Department of Transportation's efforts to lobby Congress to support the State's plan to "buy back" existing highways and transform them into toll roads. Rodriguez also called on the Chairman of the House Transportation Committee to look into TxDOT's use of taxpayer funds to promote a Texas toll road plan.

Congressman Rodriguez released the following statement:

"TxDOT's plan to basically re-tax Texas drivers is just plain wrong, and their use of taxpayer dollars to fund a pro-toll road PR campaign is an outrageous waste of taxpayer dollars," said Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez. "Our Texas tax dollars already paid to build these roads once and now TxDOT wants to tax Texans to convert existing roads to toll roads - taxing us over and over again to use these roads everyday. Today I contacted the Chairman of the House Transportation Committee to ask for a Congressional hearing to look into TxDOT's proposal and taxpayer funded advertising campaign."

The full text of Congressman Rodriguez's letter to House Transportation Chairman James Oberstar is posted below.

Congressman Rodriguez serves as a Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation.

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August 31, 2007

The Honorable James Oberstar

Chairman

House Transportation and Infrastructure

2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) recently launched a \$9 million advertising campaign to promote their Texas toll road plan. In addition to being a completely irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars, I believe it is unfair to the taxpayers of Texas for TxDOT to use funds to pay for an advertising campaign to promote converting existing roads, which have already been paid for by Texas taxpayers, into toll roads that will again tax Texas drivers who use those roads on a daily basis. Given that nearly half of the TxDOT budget consists of federal funding, I believe this is an issue that merits review by the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Therefore, I request the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee conduct a hearing into TxDOT's use of taxpayer funds for this advertising campaign and to investigate if the toll road plan being proposed by TxDOT is in the public's best interest.

As a Member representing an expansive area in Texas and one of the largest congressional districts in the country, I believe my constituents and all Texans are owed the best efforts of the government to maximize the use of the available transportation dollars toward maintenance and relief of traffic congestion -- and not toward a public relations campaign to promote increased taxation.

I appreciate your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Ciro D. Rodriguez

Member of Congress